



Update (Additional Q&A) to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for

NSF 01-164, "George E. Brown, Jr. Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation (NEES): Earthquake Engineering Research Equipment, Phase 2", Program Solicitation

Eligibility

Q: Are institutions that received NEES Phase 1 equipment awards eligible to respond to the Phase II solicitation?

A: Yes. The eligibility information is shown in the solicitation in Section III.

Q: I am in private industry and would like to use a NEES equipment site to conduct research. Is application for such research funding eligible under NSF 01-164?

A: Your research is beyond the scope of that which NEES funds. You should visit the Civil and Mechanical Systems Division web site at <http://www.eng.nsf.gov/cms/> for more information on research areas that this Division funds.

General Information

Q: Section V.A.3.E. Project Organization and Staffing Plan, of the solicitation states "Do not include the explicit names of External Advisory Committee members in the proposal; proposals that contain explicit names will be returned without review." Does this mean that the external advisory committee members we plan to invite should not be mentioned in the entire proposal? Why is it so?

A: The essential requirement is for an External Advisory Committee with membership drawn from disciplines appropriate for the tasks of ensuring technical quality, relevance and usability, and effective synergy with the other NEES program components. For the purposes of merit review of proposals it is sufficient to describe the proposed makeup by disciplines of the committee and how it is proposed to work with the project management team. By not explicitly naming your planned External Advisory Committee members, potential conflict of interest problems are avoided in selecting proposal reviewers. Accordingly, External Advisory Committee members you are planning to invite to join the committee should not be mentioned anywhere in your proposal.

Earthquake Engineering Research Equipment

Q: I am thinking about field instrumentation for buildings and site response. What is ANSS and EarthScope and do I need to coordinate with them?

A: The United States Geological Survey (USGS) Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS) is an initiative underway by the USGS to install ANSS for earthquake monitoring. ANSS is designed to organize, modernize, and standardize operations of seismic networks in the U.S. to improve the Nation's ability to respond effectively to damaging earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis. ANSS will link more than 7,000 national, regional and urban monitoring stations in real time. EarthScope is a partnership of the earth science community, including more than 100 universities, the National Science Foundation, USGS, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Department of Energy and regional and state geological surveys to apply modern observational, analytical and telecommunications technologies to investigate the structure and evolution of the North American continent and physical processes controlling earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

It is expected that requests for field instrumentation under this solicitation will be informed by activities and plans within these other initiatives in order to avoid duplication of effort. More information can be obtained for ANSS at <http://www.anss.org> and for EarthScope at <http://www.earthscope.org/>.

Miscellaneous

Q. My institution is planning to expand an existing facility in order to house the new equipment being requested under this solicitation. Because the university will be paying for these capital improvements if the project is awarded, is it necessary to obtain a detailed estimate of these costs for the proposal submission?

A. Direct costs for renovation, modification, or new construction of laboratories or other buildings are not allowable under this solicitation (See Section IV. Award Information) and, therefore, are a commitment from the institution should an award be made. The successful completion of the project very likely will depend upon the timely completion of the planned capital improvements in time for the equipment to be installed, commissioned and performance tested by September 30, 2004. Any delay in construction that might be caused by unanticipated construction cost increases would be unacceptable if they jeopardized the project completion schedule. Such cost increases could arise from relying on rough order of magnitude estimates or assumptions, or ignorance, or lack of knowledge on applicable code compliance for building construction or expansion. Proposers are encouraged to take the necessary steps in obtaining accurate capital cost improvement estimates to mitigate this possibility prior to submitting the proposal. Furthermore, this risk should be addressed in your proposal in Section V. Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions, A.3.K, Risk Identification and Mitigation. Any facilities construction or improvement included in the proposal will be a condition of the award.

Q: Appendix 2 of the proposal requests information and detailed cost estimates of hardware and software for local area networking. What about personnel costs to do this and the NEES point of presence integration?

A: Eligible costs include personnel/system administrator to assist with the LAN/NEES point of presence.

Q: How detailed a Project Execution Plan do I need?

A: Use current best practices. For example, many NSF Major Research Equipment projects use a work breakdown structure to identify tasks, milestones, deliverables, earned value, schedule, project dependencies, budget and risk assessments. This format is being used by the NEES system integration and NEES consortium development teams.

Q: Depending on the scope of work, a project such as that of NEES may be too much for just one PI. Does NSF have the provision for two PIs instead of the usual one PI? We understand that the number of co-PIs on a proposal may be more than one, but we are more interested in knowing if the work and responsibility can be shared among two PIs.

A: NSF proposals allow for only one Principal Investigator (PI) and up to four co-PIs. The reference for this requirement can be found in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG), NSF 02-2, Appendix C, which can be found at the document URL <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf022/appendixc.html>. From the GPG, Appendix C: Definitions of Categories of Personnel, it states, "The personnel categories listed on parts A and B of the Proposal Budget are defined as follows:

A. SENIOR PERSONNEL

(1-5) (co) Principal Investigator(s) -- the individual(s) designated by the grantee and approved by NSF who will be responsible for the scientific or technical direction of the project. If more than one, the first one listed will have primary responsibility for the project and the submission of reports."

For successful project execution, accountability, and interface with NSF, there is only one PI, who has primary responsibility for the project and submission of reports. Most of the NEES Phase 1 equipment proposals funded under NSF 00-6 had a PI and multiple co-PIs (up to the maximum four co-PIs allowed by NSF). Additional project personnel may be designated within the proposal.

It is suggested that you also read NSF 01-164, Section II, that discusses the position of a project manager within the management and organization structure of a NEES Phase 2 equipment project.

Broader Impacts Criteria

Q. Is it necessary to address the NSF broader impacts merit review criterion in preparing a proposal to be submitted to this solicitation?

A. Both NSF merit review criteria ("What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?" and "What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?") must be addressed in the preparation and review of proposals submitted to NSF. A revision to the NSF *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG) (NSF 02-2) that is effective for proposals submitted on or after January 1, 2002, was released November 29, 2001. This revision implements revised proposal preparation guidelines relating to the Project Summary and Project Description. These changes continue NSF's efforts to remind proposers that both NSF merit review criteria must be addressed in the preparation and review of proposals submitted to NSF. The GPG is available on the NSF website at <http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?gpg> in HTML and Portable Document Format (PDF). A complete summary of the significant changes is included within the GPG. Organizations or individuals unable to access the GPG electronically may order paper copies (maximum of five per request) by either of the following means:

- phoning the NSF Publications Clearinghouse at (301) 947-2722; or
- sending a request to pubs@nsf.gov or the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 218, Jessup, MD 20794-0218.